

tax the professional skill even of the best specialists in this field.

Concerning the increase in deaths from this cause, Dr. Paul D. White, one of America's leading cardiologists, states: "There must be a factor which is new, and I believe it to be found in the mad pace of American life today. A halt must be called."

The answer to the increase in deaths from this cause, says the Public Health Service, "lies in moderation in all things—work, play, food, drink; in avoiding overfatigue, obesity, and flabbiness from lack of muscular exercise. While life expectancy at birth has increased some twenty-five years the last century, the span of life has not increased. Life expectancy for persons past forty years of age, if anything, has become diminished. There is a crying need to slacken the tempo of our lives. Even in our recreations there is little rest."

"Considerable emphasis can be placed upon the prevention of this disease through periodic heart examinations of individuals over forty years of age. This examination should include electrocardiogram and such other means of precision as may be available to the examiners. It may be emphasized that violent exercise—such as eighteen-hole golf games and similar diversions—at least for men over forty, should not be indulged in unless the heart is in excellent condition."

CHOOSING ONE'S DOCTOR*

It has been said that "it requires a medical education to enable a man to choose a good doctor."

This is hardly true.

The day, of course, when the family physician was almost a member of the family is about gone. Such relationships still exist in the hinterlands, and in rare cases in urban communities. These intimacies, however, are mostly reminders of an older day.

This is not to infer, on the other hand, that the choice of a dependable family physician is next to impossible. There are certain fundamental questions about the modern doctor to which one may seek answers, and upon these base an entirely satisfactory choice. In general, here is a good procedure.

If you plan to move into a new community, inquire of your own doctor at your last residence, asking him to recommend a practitioner in the new town to which you are going. To check further, ask the secretary of your county medical society for a list of competent practitioners, ask the health officer of your city or county, or the secretary of the state medical association.

When first entering the new community, if you are not already supplied with doctors' names, ask at the hospital or local health office, or call the secretary of the local medical society and obtain a list of the general practitioners. Then make it your business to meet these men. Make specific and direct inquiries about what you want to know. If you are connected with some well-established fraternal, church, or business group, make inquiry among your associates. The good physician will not only not object to these personal inquiries, he will welcome them.

Here are questions to ask in connection with choosing a new physician:

1. Is he a graduate of a Class "A" school of medicine (as defined by the American Medical Association), or of a medical school known by recognized authorities as one of the best at the time he was graduated?

2. Is he a licensed practitioner in the state where he has office?

3. Has he had actual training as an interne in a hospital, or been associated with a practicing physician long enough to have obtained practical education in medicine?

4. Is he an active member of his local, county, and state medical society and, through them, of the American Medical Association, or any other recognized, organized body of physicians?

5. Is he of good personal habits, regarded by his fellow citizens as a desirable member of the community?

If he is the physician to fellow practitioners, that is an excellent guarantee of his ability. The fact that he is a member of the staff of a well-conducted hospital also indicates that he is usually a capable doctor.

These, too, are points to remember.

An ethical physician does not advertise his methods or cures in newspapers, give out circulars concerning his work or fees, indiscriminately distribute his picture, or put large signboards in his windows or outside his office to advertise his merits or wares.

Before considering any specialist, *per se*, consult your regular doctor and let him select the man if one is necessary.

No good doctor guarantees a cure; avoid him who will "take no money until a cure is brought about": this is a trick to snare the unwary. Likewise, avoid him who requires the fee in advance to cure a chronic disease.

Choose the doctor who works directly from his established residence or office and does not travel out of town or across state borders to seek his patients.

Avoid the boaster: a good doctor does not brag of his cures or suggest that they are made by secret methods. It is well to remember that there are no secrets in the medical profession.

The straightforward practitioner will not restrict his methods of treatment by dogmatic adherence to any "system" which declares all diseases are caused, for example, by colonic, liver, dietary, podal, mental, or any other type of single defect. Medical science recognizes no royal road to recovery, but proceeds upon such facts as general science has discovered and upon such theories as it may use in the absence of proved fact. It expands and constantly changes through added discovery. What is thought good practice today may, as the result of a new discovery, be replaced by a different practice tomorrow. It is through the testing periods of these new discoveries that so-called "medical fads" have their heyday.

After you have made your choice, it is wise policy to stick to one doctor.

Distinguished Service Medal.—Concerning the second medal that was awarded for distinguished service to scientific medicine at the opening general meeting at the recent St. Louis session, *The Journal of the American Medical Association* states:

"The recipient of this medal is chosen by a process of selection which insures choice of an outstanding physician and scientist. Any physician who wishes to nominate a candidate for the Distinguished Service Medal may send his nomination to the chairman of the committee, Dr. E. L. Henderson of Louisville, Kentucky. This committee sends five nominations to the Board of Trustees of the American Medical Association, which then selects three names from the five. The three names are presented to the House of Delegates at the opening of the meeting, which will on this occasion be Monday morning, May 15. The House of Delegates votes immediately and the recipient of the honor is presented with the medal on the following night.

"Last year the first medal was awarded to Dr. Rudolph Matas, distinguished surgeon of New Orleans.

"By this award the American Medical Association indicates its recognition of scientific advancement as one of the main functions of organized medicine. Fellows of the Association can cooperate by sending to the chairman of the committee the names of those whom they believe to be entitled to such an honor, together with a record of their services to science."

* From the Treasury Department, United States Public Health Service, Washington, May 26, 1939.